

# Making Afterschool Programs Better

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*Policy Brief*  
*No. 11*



**National Center for Research**  
on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing

UCLA | Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

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The work reported herein was supported in part by a subcontract from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL, subcontract no. PO54604) funded by contract no. ED-03-CO-0048, as administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

The findings and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), or the U.S. Department of Education.

To cite from this report, please use the following as your APA reference:

Huang, D., & Dietel, R. (2011). *Making afterschool programs better*. (CRESST Policy Brief). Los Angeles, CA: University of California.

The authors thank the following for their assistance with this policy brief: Joan Herman for her valuable review and feedback; Tamara Lau for her design and layout; and Karisa Peer for her editorial support.



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# Introduction

The number of students attending afterschool programs has skyrocketed in recent years, currently serving an estimated 8.4 million children (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Consequently, the demand for high quality afterschool programs, and to learn from successful ones, has never been greater. This *Making Afterschool Programs Better* policy brief, synthesizes the results from nearly 20 years of experience in evaluating afterschool programs. CRESST evaluations include U.S. Department of Education supported 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, state-supported afterschool programs across California, and multiple evaluations of the LA's Better Educated Students for Tomorrow enrichment program<sup>1</sup>.

CRESST is pleased to share this brief with the goal that others will benefit from our findings and recommendations; thus, providing an increasing number of children with a high quality afterschool program leading to exceptional learning and successful careers.

## Key Components of Effective Afterschools

A growing body of research has found that students' participation in afterschool programs is beneficial to academic achievement and social adjustment (Pierce, Hamm, & Vandell, 1999; Posner & Vandell, 1994). A recent study, for example, found that students who participated in afterschool programs had significantly higher reading achievement and were rated by teachers as having a greater expectancy of success than students who did not participate in afterschool programs (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005).

Other research has found that those students who participate in quality afterschool programs the longest (both in terms

of frequencies and duration) have lower criminal activity rates (Goldschmidt, Huang, & Chinen, 2007; Huang et. al, 2006; Lamare, 1997). Research has also discovered that higher rates of participation in afterschool programs can contribute to higher scores on academic standardized tests in mathematics, reading, and language arts (Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000; Huang, Leon, La Torre, & Mostafari, 2008). Muñoz (2002) found a positive relationship between afterschool program participation rates and improved day school attendance and academic achievement.

Drawing from research and more than a dozen afterschool evaluations, CRESST developed a model for what we consider five key components of effective afterschool programs:

<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, specific data in this policy brief are from CRESST Report 768, "What Works? Common Practices in High Functioning Afterschool Programs Across the Nation in Math, Reading, Science, Arts, Technology, and Homework—A Study by the National Partnership." The report (as well as numerous afterschool evaluations) is available on the CRESST website: [www.CRESST.org](http://www.CRESST.org).

- 1 **Goals** are clear, rigorous, and supported across the program in structure and content. Funding is adequate to support goals.
- 2 **Leadership** is experienced, well-educated, has longevity at the current site, uses effective communications, sets high expectations, and has a bottoms-up management style.
- 3 **Staff** is experienced, has longevity at current program, relates well to students, models high expectations, motivates and engages students, and works well with leaders, colleagues, and parents.
- 4 **Program** aligns to the day school, provides time for students to study, learn and practice; includes motivational activities, frequently uses technology, science and the arts to support youth development, student learning, and engagement.
- 5 **Evaluation** uses both internal (formative) and external (summative) methods. Evaluative information and data accurately measure goals; results are applied to continuous program improvement.

These five components work together to produce a high quality afterschool program (Figure 1).

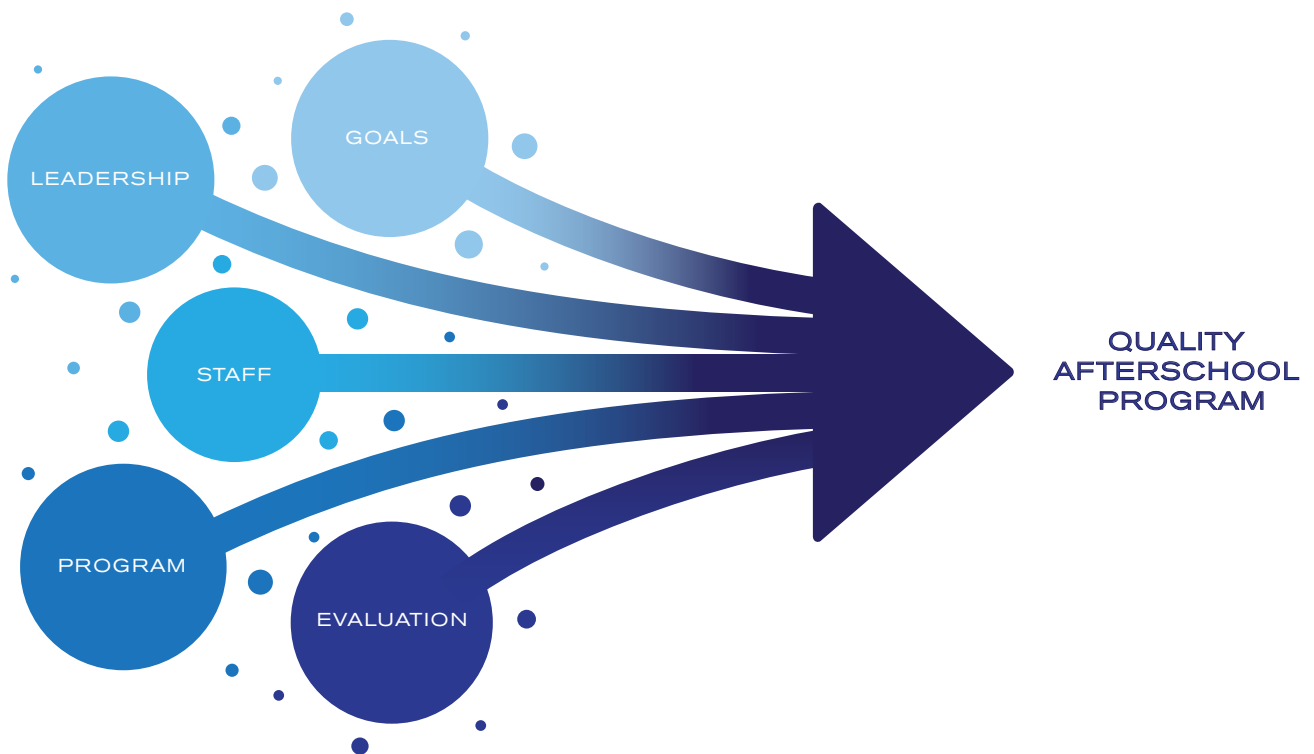


Figure 1. CRESST Afterschool Program Quality Model.

The remainder of this brief covers each of these five components. First, we provide common evaluation findings across most programs 🔍. We then provide examples, either best practices or useful observations, noted by the CRESST team 📌. We conclude with a short list of recommendations, which could help make afterschool programs even better.

## Component 1: Goals

*“Everything that we do in afterschool, we try to make it connected to the real world....One of our many goals is to make it relevant...make a connection for students to stay in school, go to college, a reason to be on a particular career path...” - Afterschool Project Director*

### Overview

Setting clear goals and desired outcomes is a cornerstone of afterschool program success (Bodilly and Beckett, 2005). Virtually all of the programs we studied had established unambiguous goals and structured their programs to meet those goals. At the same time, most programs also recognized the importance of considering student voices when making decisions regarding program activities and content; hence, many programs allowed students to provide input, especially in the arts and technology programs. As a result, students were engaged and excited to be in their afterschool programs.



## Key Evaluation Findings

- 🔍 The best programs had:
  - clearly defined goals in a written plan;
  - curricular design and specific practices aligned to program goals; and
  - internal and external evaluations (for further details, see Component 5 of this report).
- 🔍 “Achievement” focused programs, often district-affiliated, were:
  - usually more structured than other afterschool program types;
  - stressed improvement of academic performance;
  - hired more certified teachers; and
  - maintained a more consistent linkage with the day school than less achievement-focused programs.
- 🔍 Goals of many high quality afterschool programs also had a specific emphasis (e.g., science, technology, homework support, community involvement, or the arts).

## Examples

- 📌 The site coordinator at one math program described program goals as focused on developing students’ academic skills within a specific content area: “Our primary goals are to bring the student to grade level.” Similarly, goals for three of the math programs and four of the reading programs specifically targeted students who were struggling academically.
- 📌 A primary goal of many arts focused afterschool programs was to provide students, who otherwise would have little-to-no exposure to the arts, with quality art experiences. Many interviewees reported using an integrative approach to arts instruction that could help students who were struggling academically and personally.
- 📌 Similar to arts, all science staff responded to questions about curricular goals by suggesting a primary interest in offering positive science experiences to students. A few went further to explain that their principle goal was to improve standardized test scores in science by focusing on extending day school instruction into afterschool.
- 📌 Interview data across seven homework-focused programs suggested that the primary goals in afterschool homework were to complete homework and increase academic achievement.
- 📌 Nearly all of the technology staff had the goal of teaching students the mechanics of a broad range of technology skills, an interest in encouraging the students to use those skills to enhance learning in other



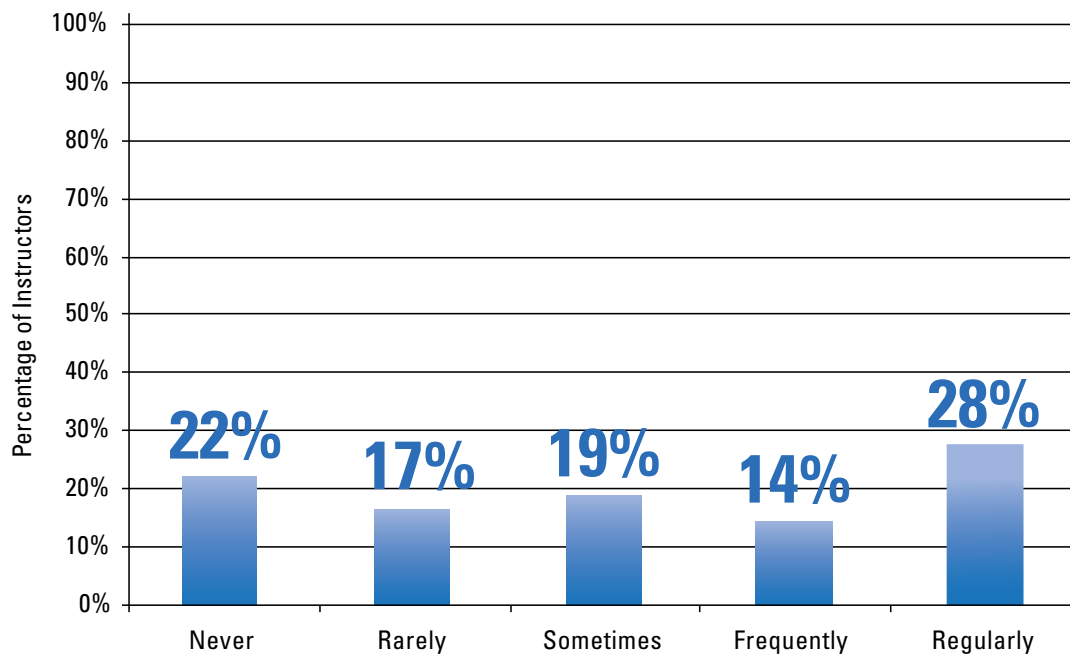


Figure 2. Frequency of communication between afterschool program and day-school staff.

content areas, and teaching the students a technical skill that is relevant to their real lives (both now and in the future).

In aligning activities to achieve their program goals, nearly all interviewees described the merits of developing a curriculum that combined academic skill development with opportunities to explore and encourage students' social development. One program director summed up:

*"Our goal is to help each child to make sure that it's an afterschool program that's fun, but at the same time it's enriching, so they grow and learn every day, so they can take home more knowledge..."*

## Component 2: Leadership

*"Obviously, we try to be democratic....So one of the things we try to do here, how we want to make this a great place to work, is in finding great people, then giving the people the power and leeway and the accountability, but also the freedom to do what they think works best, and trusting them...."*

- Afterschool Project Director

### Overview

Our studies found that directors and managers of high functioning afterschool programs usually had many years of experience in afterschool programs. Further, the leaders nearly always shared decision-making with their staff across afterschool goals, programs, and evaluation.

### Key Evaluation Findings

- 🔍 The best programs had leaders who:
  - articulated a clear program mission, vision statement, and goals;
  - decentralized decision making; used a bottoms up leadership style;
  - trusted in the knowledge and skills of staff regarding curriculum and instruction;
  - promoted a team culture of positive relationships, frequent communication, and staff problem-solving skills;
  - insured that instructors and students had adequate materials and resources; and
  - provided all staff with professional development opportunities that improved individual and team skills.
- 🔍 The majority of both site coordinators and instructors said that afterschool instructors had an active voice in decisions about curriculum and instruction (4.4 average on a 5.0 point scale) and took active roles in program leadership and decision-making (4.1 average).
- 🔍 Administrators consistently described the value of staff's content-specific skills and expertise; as a result, curriculum development was a group process in which leaders gave staff members a strong voice in designing instruction.
- 🔍 Leaders and staff across high-quality programs maintained good relationships with the day school personnel. However, few of them had established formal communication systems for that purpose

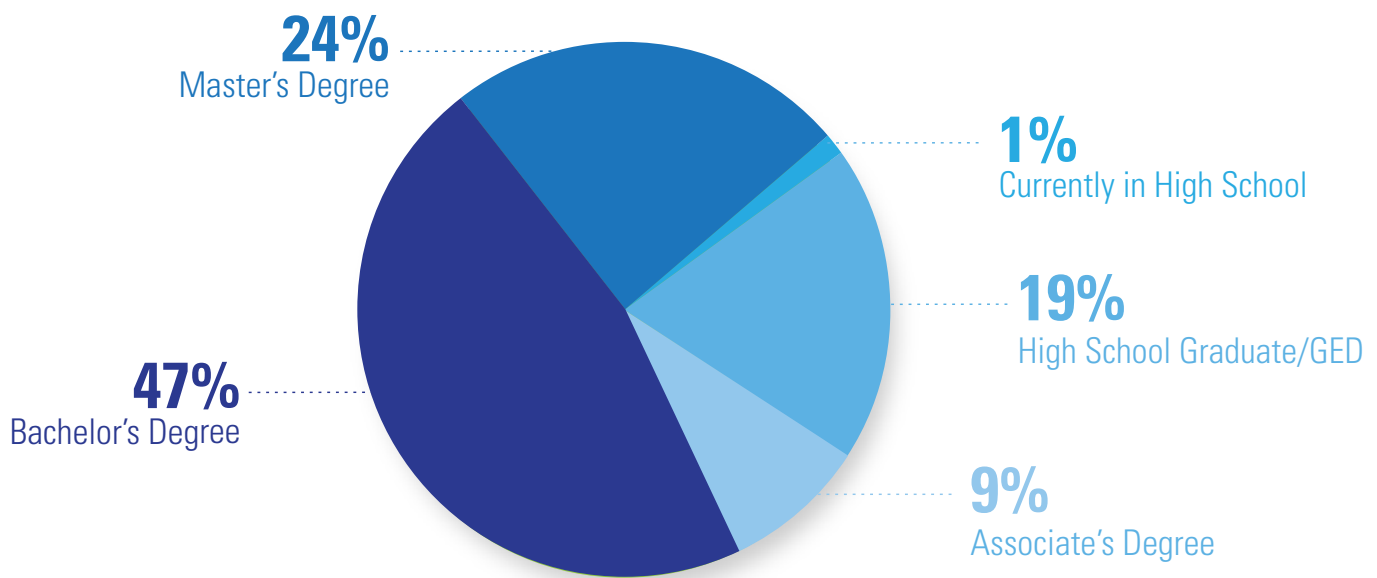


Figure 3. Educational levels of afterschool staff.

(as indicated in Figure 2), with less than 50% of afterschool staff reporting that they had regular or frequent communication with day school teachers (see Recommendations section).

### Examples

- One site coordinator expressed appreciation for the staff by stating, "These are professional adults...and they are the best ones to implement the curriculum... They're right there with the students...they know what their levels are and their abilities."
- An arts program instructor explained, "My experience has been that the afterschool teachers propose something that we'd like to do with the kids afterschool and [the director] then just talks to us about what our plans are. We... report to her in terms of lesson plans and how we incorporate standards and benchmarks, but a lot of freedom is really given to us. We teach what we're comfortable teaching and what we're passionate about."
- A project director at a technology program said that his staff's latitude was evenly balanced by a strong level of accountability for their curricular choices. "Every quarter they have to come back to us and tell us how they're doing. They report back as to what is going on at their...programs. In terms of actual decision-making and setting goals and deciding what we're going to do, that's much more of a bottom-up process."

## Component 3: Staff

*"We recognized that the other role we (staff) have to play is to get children engaged in the learning process. So it's not just about completing the homework, but it's about finding ways outside of the school to get them interested, excited, feeling confident, and to build their self-esteem, so that they want to come back the next day and try a little harder."* - Afterschool Staff Instructor

### Overview

We found that high quality programs recruited qualified staff and created collegial environments supporting their programs' missions. Afterschool leaders were able to retain staff and achieve lower turnover rates than other programs because staff felt respected, supported, autonomous, and confident in their ability to reach their students. In turn, staff and students constructed positive relationships with each other, characterized by warmth and mutual respect.

Staff was often role a model for students, creating a norm of high expectations, appropriate student behavior, good school attendance, effective work habits, and positive attitudes towards learning.

### Key Evaluation Findings

- Staff from quality programs generally had high educational levels. Forty-seven percent of all staff had Bachelor's degrees; twenty-four percent had a Master's degree (see Figure 3).

- 🔍 Afterschool staff in quality programs usually had substantial afterschool experience. Sixty-six percent had more than three years of work experience in afterschool; twenty-three percent had six years or more of experience.
- 🔍 Program staff at high quality sites also tended to have low turnover. The majority of the staff had been at their current site for three years or more (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 Positive relationships and interactions between the staff and the students were observed in virtually all high quality programs, particularly in terms of expectations for student performance, disciplinary issues, and democracy.
- 🔍 All interviewees reported having some form of technology-related professional development available in their afterschool program.
- 🔍 Most professional development opportunities were for helping students with reading and math, applying state standards to the curriculum, and connecting with the day school. Fewer opportunities were offered on topics of English learners, special needs students, evaluation, and assessment (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 A higher percentage of site coordinators reported receiving professional development in most categories (other than working with English language learners), compared to instructors who reported receiving the lowest percentage of professional development in program and self-evaluation (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 Although staff generally found professional development useful, only 26% had regular (2-4) opportunities each year. About 50% of the homework program staff reported that no professional development was offered to them (see Recommendations section).

## Examples

- 🔍 Nearly all quality afterschool programs approached decision-making in a democratic fashion. One program allowed students to offer input on where they would like to conduct their service learning projects; others considered students' activities choices and made great efforts to include them in their program decision-making.
- 🔍 Arts-, science-, and technology-focused afterschool programs tended to give students more autonomy and input into programs compared to homework or academic focused programs. One arts program staff stated that student inputs were "always of great value; student interests had a vast impact on art curriculum content." Consequently, students took ownership in their learning and remained engaged.

## Component 4: Staff

*"These are kids who have never been exposed to anything—our goal is to open their minds to new things, and to show that they can do it....We want a well-balanced, well-rounded program with a lot of different things to offer to the children." - Afterschool Site Coordinator*

Study findings revealed curricular similarities and differences across all programs, a majority of which offered three or more activities each day. Most programs included homework help or tutoring, but other activities ranged from academic (e.g., math, reading, writing, science) to enrichment (e.g., arts and crafts, cooking, gardening, health and nutrition, cultural activities, computers) and recreation (e.g., sports, dance, drill team, outdoor games). The frequency and duration of instruction offered by the programs are provided in Table 1.

These findings suggest that students were receiving adequate afterschool time for learning and skills practice. Observation reports across the programs also indicated that students appeared to be mostly engaged and attentive, and enjoyed the activities. Virtually all programs provided substantial time for recreational and crafts activities, keeping students engaged while exercising other parts of their brains.

## Key Evaluation Findings

- 🔍 The majority of programs employed unique and innovative strategies to engage students in the afterschool setting, placing a particular emphasis on making learning fun.
- 🔍 Technology programs reported the most frequent use of research-based practices, whereas reading programs reported the lowest frequency.
- 🔍 Technology, science, arts, and homework programs appeared to be more focused on developing higher order thinking skills, whereas reading and math programs were more focused on direct skills instruction.
- 🔍 Most programs shared similar methods of disseminating information to parents, as well as a means of encouraging their involvement in the afterschool programs
- 🔍 Parents were very satisfied with the programs both in terms of positive changes in their children's behaviors and attitudes, and in general program functioning. They felt that the staff cared about and respected their children. They also reported that



Content area	Average duration of daily instruction	Average number of days offered per week
Reading	51 min.	3.20
Math	66 min.	2.58
Science	77 min.	2.28
Art	77 min.	3.72
Technology	105 min.	3.55
Homework	45 min.	4.00

Table 1. Duration and Frequency of Instruction by Content Area

afterschool staff dealt with their children's behavioral problems promptly.

- 🔍 Over half of the programs took field trips to enhance student learning and motivation.
- 🔍 Many of the high quality programs had social or character development in their curriculum as well as a community involvement component.
- 🔍 However, links to day school curriculum were at low levels, even at high quality sites. Communications with the day school teachers occurred mostly in forms of brief, informal contacts such as email or casual drop-in conversations. The key topics on most of the communications between day school and afterschool were homework related (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 The need for additional space was commonly mentioned by both site coordinators and program staff (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 According to most program staff, another scarce resource was access to technology and particularly computers (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 Almost all programs had fairly low parent participation and volunteerism, as well as low percentages of formal parent-teacher meetings. For example, only 19% of staff met with parents on a regular basis. Low parent involvement was usually attributed to parental work commitments (see Recommendations section).

## Examples

- 🔍 Afterschool programs used a number of strategies to keep students engaged in learning, including cross-

content integration, diversity of activities, real world examples, dialogic and cooperative learning, and cultural awareness programs. Learning was often embedded discretely in sports, games, discussions, and journal writing. A site coordinator explained the approach:

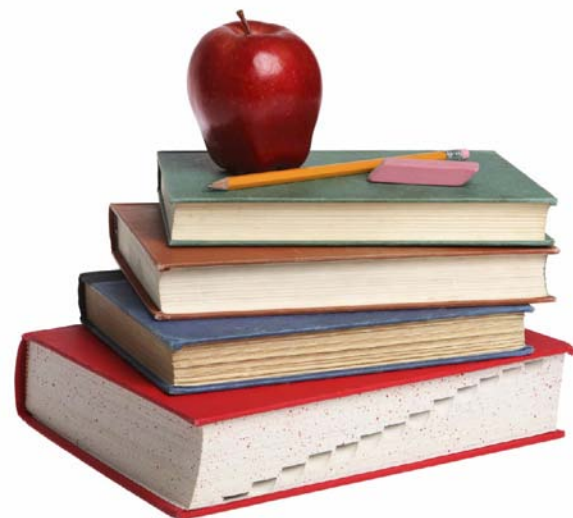
*"I think that because a lot of our program is disguised learning, a lot of times the kids don't even realize that they are doing math or that they are doing language arts or reading."*

- 🔍 Staff at one site described a science program that was the result of a collaborative effort between day school and afterschool instructors, designed around the district's science curriculum, grounded in state and/or national science standards, and supplemented with purchased science kit materials. Science lessons revolved around a fish hatchery theme, developed primarily during day school instruction, and maintained and studied throughout the year in both the day school and the afterschool program. According to interviewees, this concept provided a focus that gave students a beneficial sense of continuity between day school and afterschool science instruction.
- 🔍 Almost all afterschool programs offered arts activities for their students as enrichment including poetry, dance, drama, choir, and drawing. One program instituted an innovative program, "Fun with Junk," where kids created art projects out of recyclables. Other sites put on drama, dancing, or singing productions for fellow students, teachers, and parents; thereby, providing opportunities for students to collaborate with each other.

- Many sites provided character development. The site coordinator at a reading afterschool program described two character programs that they offered students:

The girls get “Smart Girls”, which is also character building but it deals with those life changes during puberty, taking care of your body in terms of hygiene, and what does it mean to be a woman in society. For the boys it’s “Passport to Manhood.”

Another site coordinator for a math afterschool program mentioned a program called Character Development, which focused on teaching students values, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and caring.



- Community involvement was common in the programs, such as making get well cards for patients in the hospitals, taking trips to nursing homes to sing to the senior citizens, recycling or community beautification efforts, and cultivating community gardens. One afterschool program worked with a local charitable organization not only to restore a public garden, but also to hike, take horticulture classes, go rowing, and swim in the lake.

- Community members often volunteered in the afterschool programs, often a result of affiliations with local universities and high schools, who frequently tutored students. Boy and girl scouts, churches, and boys and girls club members also volunteered. Afterschool program staff frequently invited science experts from the community to visit their programs and share their own experiences of practical, real-world applications for science. As one project director explained,

“What makes it unique [at our program] is we have so much community involvement in teaching science...We’ve really tried to get experts in the field to come in...I don’t think that there is any program that has more community involvement in teaching students science than ours.”

## Component 5: Evaluation

*When you look at their assessments on the [state test]...they weren’t measuring up with other states; and because of that we had to go back and revisit our curriculum to see where we were falling through the cracks. - Afterschool Program Principal*

### Overview

As outlined in the CRESST afterschool model, ongoing evaluation is necessary to measure program performance and make continuous improvement. While evaluation data serves many stakeholders including students, parents, and afterschool staff— funding agencies (who are making a growing investment in afterschool programs) increasingly want to know if their outlays are making measureable improvements.

We found that nearly all afterschool programs used internal evaluation to identify program strengths and weaknesses. Internal evaluation, often called formative evaluation, was usually done by the program’s own staff or staff within its funding agencies governance structure. The stakes or consequences were usually low – with program improvement the key goal. An external evaluation, on the other hand, typically had higher consequences for programs and was nearly always conducted by a disinterested third party. In some cases, accreditation or even program continuance may be decided by an unbiased outside, “external” evaluation expert.

Interview and survey responses across our studies indicated that even though rigorous examination of data was rare, nearly all of the afterschool programs conducted internal or external evaluations of their programs.

### Key Evaluation Findings

- All but two programs reported having conducted internal evaluations. Evaluation varied from informal conversations between afterschool staff, day school staff, and parents, to a formal administration of surveys to students, parents, staff, and tracking of test scores, grades, and attendance records (see Recommendations section).
- Responses from interviewees suggested that many of the programs were evaluated externally, sometimes by an evaluation organization experienced in program evaluation. Interviewees consistently indicated that most of the evaluations were of the entire program.
- External evaluation methodologies typically included pre-post testing or classroom evaluations, comparison groups, surveys, focus groups, observational assessments, or a combination of methods.

- In general, interviewees from the majority of the programs reported positive results from external evaluations, although specific results were often not substantiated with reports (see Recommendations section).
- For the reading and math programs that were closely affiliated with school districts, approximately one third of the programs mentioned having an external evaluator.

## Examples

- In general, interviewees most frequently mentioned using the results of internal evaluation to serve as a baseline for instruction, monitor student progress, and document program impact. For example, the principal at one of the science afterschool programs reported that student achievement data from an internal evaluation were used to revise science curricula at the afterschool program in order to align instruction with the standards and improve student performance.
- A few formal external evaluations and systematic tracking of student progress showed improvements in

attendance, classroom grades, and achievement scores.

- About half of the afterschool staff reported that the students in their afterschool programs had improved their day school attendance, were paying more attention in class, and had fewer discipline problems (see Figure 4).
- Fifty eight percent of teachers agreed that the afterschool program students increased their frequency of class participation; most teachers (61%) agreed that their students in the afterschool program put more effort into school work.
- At the less quantifiable level, several programs reported improvements in attitudes toward schooling, student efficacy, confidence, and engagement.

*"Attendance is unbelievable. I have kids that say, 'I only came to school today because I knew I was going to be working with you.' I feel, just from talking with my teachers, that behavior problems in some instances are resolved. Students have success in my class." - Afterschool Arts Instructor*

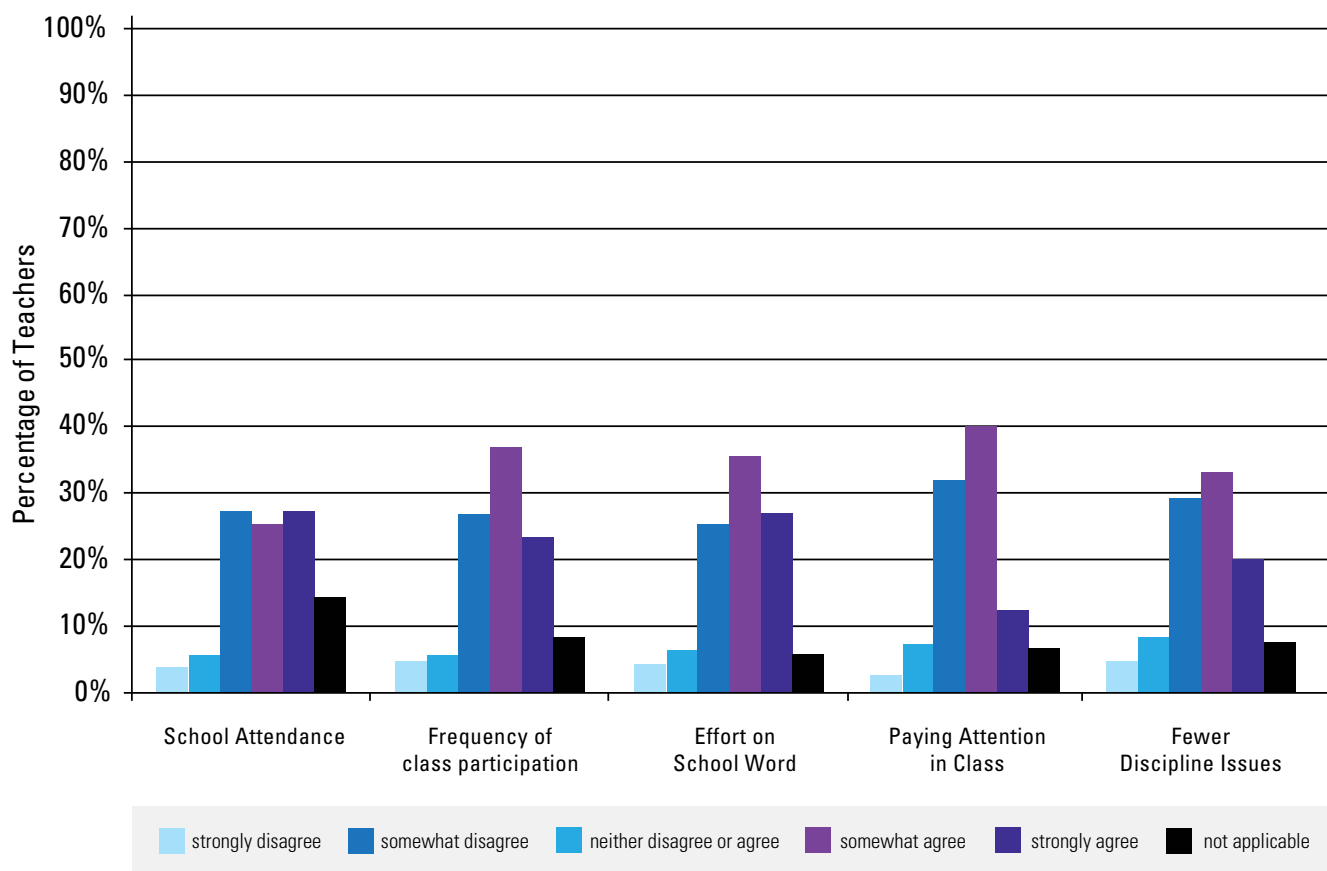


Figure 4. Teacher perception of changes in student behavior.

## Recommendations

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Our findings point to the contributions of goals, leadership, staff, programs and evaluation to high quality afterschool programs. Nevertheless, we noticed consistent areas of weaknesses in even the best afterschool programs. We offer the following research-based recommendations 📌 that we believe will help improve any afterschool program:

### Staff Stability

Our study's results indicated that high functioning programs tend to have low staff turnover rates. Over 60% of the staff had between 1–7 years of experience at the current site and over 30% of the staff had over 4 years of experiences at the current site. Staff stability is important for relationship building and a basis for students to build trust, positive attitudes, and efficacy toward learning.

📌 **Recommendation.** Funders and afterschool administrators should consider incentives for building staff retention, ranging from educational opportunities (e.g., tuition grants) to “outstanding afterschool teams or teachers” nominated and selected by parents, teachers, and students. A pay scale incentive for years of service and a possible career ladder may also improve staff retention.

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### Collaboration with the Day School

In our studies, all of the programs maintained positive relationships with the day school. However, despite the importance of this relationship, too few programs had strategic systems established that supported and strengthened this connection.

📌 **Recommendation.** Formal agreements and written plans (ideally in early stages) should address day school collaboration. Time for day school teachers and afterschool staff to meet and plan lessons together plus a communications system, (e.g., homework log between day school teachers and afterschool staff), should be included in both school and afterschool plans. Funding agencies should budget additional resources for afterschool programs that will facilitate linkages, such as shared professional development, staff retreats, or workshops that jointly support students.

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### Space and Technology

Many programs relied on access to common space, such as an auditorium or a classroom shared with day school teachers, which often caused logistical problems and sometimes prevented planned activities from taking place. Furthermore, some programs expressed difficulty with not having consistent access to classrooms. A site coordinator illuminated the problem, “I would say physical space would be definitely a big thing with our program....That is probably one of the hardest things to work with just because every 6 weeks we are readjusting the classroom to new classroom seating charts, new areas in which the students can and cannot go.”

📌 **Recommendation.** Afterschool space issues should be addressed early in the planning process and reviewed each year for adequacy. Technology too, especially with shared equipment, should also be addressed, recognizing the growing role that technology plays in both learning and recreational activities.

“Formal agreements and written plans, ideally in early stages, should address day school collaboration.”



## Professional Development

We found that professional development was not regularly offered at all program sites, and when offered, participation rates were often low. Moreover, project directors and site coordinators appeared to attend conferences and workshops more frequently than program staff.

✔ **Recommendation.** Because professional development has a strong correlation with staff efficacy, instructional quality, and student outcomes (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005), federal and state policies guiding the development and operations of afterschool programs should *provide additional guidelines for sufficient quality professional development for all after-school staff*, especially at the instructor level.

✔ **Recommendation.** Afterschool programs should include professional development in their written plans. Those plans should address funding issues, for substitutes, for example. If there is a “training-of-the-trainer” approach at the sites, written guidelines should include evaluation to ensure professional development fidelity. When planning the yearly calendar, professional development for all staff should be included. Topics should address program evaluation, assessment and data use, plus needs of English learners and students with disabilities.

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## Content and Curriculum

Our study findings showed that although most program staff were aware of the standards within their specific content areas, they were less knowledgeable about the links between the standards and successful instructional practices. Professional development can help address this need, which is increasingly important with most state’s recent adoptions of the common core standards.

✔ **Recommendation.** Professional development should help all **program staff expand their knowledge of content standards and instructional methods** for aligning those standards to instruction. Program goals should include content and curriculum enhancement for staff as a key purpose, plus implementation and evaluation methods.

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## Parent Involvement

Although the research literature continuously stresses the importance of parent involvement in influencing children’s academic outcomes, our study repeatedly found that parents, though very satisfied with the programs, were generally not involved in attending events or volunteering in afterschool programs.

✔ **Recommendation.** Despite the time constraints families face, afterschool leaders should continue to include **parent involvement as a central program goal**, offering specific late afternoon or early evening times for parent involved events, as well as using both social networks and websites to support positive communication between parents and staff. Parents should be included in an active program committee or evaluation team when possible, thereby enhancing parent involvement and contributions to the afterschool program. Open houses and parent-teacher conferences can facilitate parent participation. Home visits and family assistance can further solidify the relationships between the afterschool and its families.

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## Evaluation

The contributions of effective internal and external evaluations must not be overlooked. Equally important is the use of the findings for specific program improvements.

✔ **Recommendation.** **Federal, state, and local policies should address and provide funding for systematic evaluation of all programs.** Evaluation should ideally include internal, formative evaluation as well as annual or biennial external, summative evaluations. Multiple perspectives should be sought when gathering evaluation data including parent, student, and community input. Evaluation results should span accountability needs as well as guide continuous program improvement. To be effective, all evaluations should be in written format.

✔ **Recommendation.** **For internal evaluation, program directors and site coordinators need to clearly define the purposes of evaluations in their goals.** Self-evaluation tools can be used to understand staff professional development needs, staff utilization of research-based activities, and staff knowledge of standards-based curriculum. Using these evaluation results, program directors can implement changes, allocate resources, and design professional development opportunities to further staff expertise in needed areas.



✔ **Recommendation. External evaluation should focus on student outcomes**, ideally using student data from the regular day school level that includes both performance and attendance information. It is crucial that external evaluation results are provided in a written format, so that comparisons may be made over periods of time. In order for evaluation data, either internal or external, to be used effectively and lead to program improvement, results must be well communicated to all stakeholders and a system created for monitoring evaluation usage.

## Conclusion

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Even at a time of austere federal, state, and local funding – we highly encourage policy makers, afterschool managers, and school districts to fully budget afterschool programs that will provide high quality leaders and staff. Professional development and external evaluation should also be included in both budgets and program planning. As one program director said:

“I think it’s very important that everybody understand the power that can come from an afterschool program in affecting change, not only cultural change on campus but also individually in particular lives. The sense of accomplishment that comes from being in one of our programs where they have more freedom to explore and have more hands-on experiences is profound.”

## Resources

### Links to Various CRESST Afterschool Evaluations

- [Examining Practices of Staff Recruitment and Retention in Four High-Functioning Afterschool Programs: Extended Study from the National Afterschool Partnership Report](#)
- [Examining the Relationship between LA’s BEST Program Attendance and Academic Achievement of LA’s BEST Students](#)
- [Identification of Key Indicators of Quality in Afterschool Programs](#)
- [A Circle of Learning: Children and Adults Growing Together in LA’s BEST](#)
- [What Works? Common Practices in High Functioning Afterschool Programs Across the Nation in Math, Reading, Science, Arts, Technology, and Homework--A Study by the National Partnership](#)
- [The Afterschool Hours: Examining the Relationship between Afterschool Staff-Based Social Capital and Student Engagement in LA’s BEST](#)
- [The Afterschool Experience in \*Salsa, Sabor y Salud\*](#)
- [Exploring the Relationships between LA’s BEST Program Attendance and Cognitive Gains of LA’s BEST Students](#)
- [Preparing Students for the 21st Century: Exploring the Effect of Afterschool Participation on Students’ Collaboration Skills, Oral Communication Skills, and Self-Efficacy](#)
- [Exploring the Intellectual, Social and Organizational Capitals at LA’s BEST](#)

### Link to the Afterschool Toolkit

- [SEDL - National Center for Quality Afterschool / Afterschool Training Toolkit](#)

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